

TALES AND ANECDOTES OF THE
PASTORAL LIFE.

No II.

THE wedding-day at length arrived ; and as the bridegroom had charged us to be there at an early hour, we set out on horseback, immediately after breakfast, for the remote hamlet of Stridekirtin. We found no regular path, but our way lay through a country which it is impossible to view without soothing emotions. The streams are numerous, clear as crystal, and wind along the glens in many fantastic and irregular curves. The mountains are green to the tops, very high, and form many beautiful soft and shaded outlines. They are, besides, literally speckled with snowy flocks, which, as we passed, were feeding or resting with such appearance of undisturbed repose, that the heart naturally found itself an involuntary sharer in the pastoral tranquillity that pervaded all around.

My good friend, Mr Grumple, could give me no information regarding the names of the romantic glens and mountains that came within our view ; he, however, knew who were the proprietors of the land, who the tenants, what rent and stipend each of them paid, and whose teinds were unexhausted ; this seemed to be the sum and substance of his knowledge concerning the life, character, and manners, of his rural parishioners, save that he could sometimes adduce circumstantial evidence that such and such farmers had made money of their land, and that others had made very little or none.

This district, over which he presides in an ecclesiastical capacity, forms an extensive portion of the Arcadia of Britain. It was likewise, in some late ages, noted for its zeal in the duties of religion, as well as for a thirst after the acquirement of knowledge concerning its doctrines ; but under the tuition of such a pastor as my relative appears to be, it is no wonder that practical religion should be losing ground from year to year, and scepticism, the natural consequence of laxity in religious duties, gaining ground in proportion.

It may be deemed, perhaps, rather indecorous, to indulge in such reflections respecting any individual who has the honour to be ranked as a mem-

ber of a body so generally respectable as our Scottish Clergy, and who, at the same time, maintains a fair *worldly* character ; but in a general discussion—in any thing that relates to the common weal of mankind, all such inferior considerations must be laid aside. And the more I consider the simplicity of the people of whom I am now writing—the scenes among which they have been bred—and their lonely and sequestered habits of life, where the workings and phenomena of nature alone appear to attract the eye or engage the attention,—the more I am convinced that the temperament of their minds would naturally dispose them to devotional feelings. If they were but taught to read their Bibles, and only saw uniformly in the ministers of religion that sanctity of character by which the profession ought ever to be distinguished, these people would naturally be such as every well-wisher to the human race would desire a scattered peasantry to be. But when the most decided variance between example and precept is forced on their observation, what should we, or what can we, expect ? Men must see, hear, feel, and judge accordingly. And certainly in no other instance is a patron so responsible to his sovereign, his country, and his God, as in the choice he makes of spiritual pastors.

These were some of the reflections that occupied my mind as I traversed this beautiful pastoral country with its morose teacher, and from these I was at length happily aroused by the appearance of the cottage, or shepherd's steading, to which we were bound. It was situated in a little valley in the bottom of a wild glen, or *hope*, as it is there called. It stood all alone ; but besides the dwelling-house, there was a little byre that held the two cows and their young,—a good stack of hay, another of peats,—a sheep-house, and two homely gardens ; and the place had altogether something of a snug, comfortable appearance. Though this is only an individual picture, I am told it may be viewed as a general one of almost every shepherd's dwelling in the south of Scotland ; and it is only such pictures that, in the course of these tales, I mean to present to the public.

A number of the young shepherds and country-lasses had already arrived, impatient for the approaching wed-

ding; others were coming down the green hills in mixed parties all around, leading one another, and skipping with the agility of lambs. They were all walking barefooted and barelegged, male and female—the men were dressed much in the ordinary way, only that the texture of their clothes was somewhat coarse, and the women had black beavers, white gowns, and “green coats kilted to the knee.” When they came near the house they went into little sequestered hollows, the men and women apart, “pat on their hose an’ shoon, and made themsels a’ trig an’ witching,” and then came and joined the group with a joy that could not be restrained by walking,—they run to mix with their youthful associates.

Still as they arrived, we saw, on our approach, that they drew up in two rows on the green, and soon found that it was a contest at leaping. The shepherds were stripped to the shirt and drawers, and exerting themselves in turn with all their might, while their sweethearts and sisters were looking on with no small share of interest.

We received a kind and hospitable welcome from honest Peter and his father, who was a sagacious-looking old carle, with a broad bonnet and gray locks; but the contest on the green still continuing, I went and joined the circle, delighted to see a pastime so appropriate to the shepherd’s life. I was utterly astonished at the agility which the fellows displayed.

They took a short race of about twelve or fourteen paces, which they denominated the *ramrace*, and then rose from the footing-place with such a bound as if they had been going to mount and fly into the air. The crooked guise in which they flew shewed great art—the knees were doubled upward—the body bent forward—and the head thrown somewhat back; so that they alighted on their heels with the greatest ease and safety, their joints being loosened in such a manner that not one of them was straight. If they fell backward on the ground, the leap was not accounted fair. Several of the antagonists took the *ramrace* with a staff in their hand, which they left at the footing-place as they rose. This I thought unfair, but none of their opponents objected to the custom. I measured the distance, and found that

two of them had actually leapt twenty-two feet, on a level plain, at one bound. This may appear extraordinary to those who never witnessed such an exercise, but it is a fact of which I can adduce sufficient proof.

Being delighted as well as astonished at seeing these feats of agility, I took Peter aside, and asked him if I might offer prizes for some other exercises. “Hout na,” said Peter; “ye’ll affront them; let them just alane; they hae eneuch o’ incitement e’now, an’ rather owre muckle atween you an’ me; forebye the brag o’ the thing—as lang as the lasses stand’ and look at them, they’ll ply atween death an’ life.” What Peter said was true,—instead of getting weary of their sports, their ardour seemed to increase; and always as soon as the superiority of any individual in one particular exercise was manifest, another was instantly resorted to; so that ere long there was one party engaged in wrestling, one in throwing the stone, and another at hop-step-and-leap, all at one and the same time.

This last seems to be rather the favourite amusement. It consists of three succeeding bounds, all with the same race; and as the exertion is greater, and of longer continuance, they can judge with more precision the exact capability of the several competitors. I measured the ground, and found the greatest distance effected in this way to be forty-six feet. I am informed, that whenever two or three young shepherds are gathered together, at fold or bught, moor or market, at all times and seasons, Sundays excepted, one or more of these athletic exercises is uniformly resorted to; and certainly, in a class where hardiness and agility are so requisite, they can never be too much encouraged.

But now all these favourite sports were terminated at once by a loud cry of “Hurra! the broose! the broose!” Not knowing what *the broose* meant, I looked all around with great precipitation, but for some time could see nothing but hills. At length, however, by marking the direction in which the rest looked, I perceived, at a considerable distance down the glen, five horsemen coming at full speed on a determined race, although on such a road, as I believe, a race was never before contested. It was that by which we had lately come, and the only one

that led to the house from all the four quarters of the world. For some time it crossed "the crooks of the burn," as they called them; that is, it kept straight up the bottom of the glen, and crossed the burn at every turning. Of course every time that the group crossed this stream, they were for a moment involved in a cloud of spray that almost hid them from view, and the frequent recurrence of this rendered the effect highly comic.

Still, however, they kept apparently close together, till at length the path left the bottom of the narrow valley, and came round the sloping base of a hill that was all interspersed with drains and small irregularities of surface; this producing no abatement of exertion or speed, horses and men were soon foundering, plunging, and tumbling about in all directions. If this was amusing to view, it was still more so to hear the observations of the delighted group that stood round me and beheld it. "Ha, ha, ha! yonder's ane aff! Gude faith! yon's Jock o' the Meer-Cleuch; he has gotten an ill-faur'd flaip.—Holloa! yonder gaes another, down through a lair to the een-holes! Weel done, Aedie o' Aberloak! Hie till him, Tousy, outhur now or never! Lay on, ye deevil, an' hing by the mane! Hurray!"

The women were by this time screaming, and the men literally jumping and clapping their hands for joy at the deray that was going on; and there was one little elderly-looking man whom I could not help noting; he had fallen down on the ground in a convulsion of laughter, and was spurring and laying on it with both hands and feet. One, whom they denominated Davie Scott o' the Ramscycleugh Burn, amid the bay of dogs, and the shouts of men and women, got first to the bridegroom's door, and of course was acknowledged to have won the *broose*; but the attention was soon wholly turned from him to those behind. The man whose horse had sunk in the bog, perceiving that all chance of extricating it again on the instant was out of the question, lost not a moment, but sprung to his feet—threw off his clothes, hat, and shoes. all at one brush—and ran towards the goal with all his might. Jock o' the Meer Cleuch, who was still a good way farther back, and crippled besides with his fall, perceiving this, mounted a-

gain—whipped on furiously, and would soon have overhied his pedestrian adversary; but the shepherds are bad horsemen, and, moreover, Jock's horse, which belonged to Gideon of Kirkhope, was unacquainted with the sheep-drains, and terrified at them; consequently, by making a sudden jerk backwards when he should have leapt across one of them, and when Jock supposed that he was just going to do so, he threw his rider a second time. The shouts of laughter were again renewed, and every one was calling out, "Now for the mell! Now for the mell! Deil tak the hindmost now!" These sounds reached Jock's ears; he lost no time in making a last effort, but flew at his horse again—remounted him—and, by urging him to a desperate effort, actually got a-head of his adversary just when within ten yards of the door, and thus escaped the disgrace of *winning the mell*.

I was afterwards told, that in former ages it was the custom on the Border, when the victor in the race was presented with the prize of honour, the one who came in last was, at the same time, presented with a mallet or large wooden hammer, called a *mell* in the dialect of the country, and that then the rest of the competitors stood in need to be near at hand, and instantly to force the *mell* from him, else he was at liberty to knock as many of them down with it as he could. The *mell* has now, for many years, been only a nominal prize; but there is often more sport about the gaining of it than the principal one. There was another occurrence which added greatly to the animation of this, which I had not time before fully to relate. About the time when the two unfortunate wights were unhorsed in the bog, those who still kept on were met and attacked, open mouth, by at least twenty frolicsome collies, that seemed fully as intent on sport as their masters. These bit the hind-legs of the horses, snapped at their noses, and raised such an outrage of barking, that the poor animals, forespent as they were, were constrained to lay themselves out almost beyond power. Nor did the fray cease when the race was won. Encouraged by the noise and clamour which then arose about the gaining of the *mell*, the staunch collies continued the attack, and hunted the

racers round and round the houses with great speed, while the horses were all the time wheeling and flinging most furiously, and their riders, in desperation, vociferating and cursing their assailants.

All the guests now crowded together, and much humour and blunt wit passed about the gaining of the broose. Each of the competitors had his difficulties and cross accidents to relate; and each affirmed, that if it had not been such and such hindrances, he would have gained the brooze to a certainty. Davie Scott o' the Ramsey-cleuch-burn, however, assured them, that "he was aye hauding in his yaud wi' the left hand, and gin he had liket to gie her out her head, she wad hae gallopit amaist a third faster."—"That may be," said Aedie o' Aberlosk, "but I hae come better on than I expectit wi' my Cameronian naig. I never saw him streak himsel sae afore—I dare say he thought that Davie was auld Clavers mountit on Hornie. Poor fallow!" continued he, patting him, "he has a good deal o' anti-prelatic dourness in him; but I see he has some spirit, for a' that. I bought him for a powney, but he's turned out a beast."

I next overheard one proposing to the man who left his horse, and exerted himself so manfully on foot, to go and pull his horse out of the quagmire. "Na, na," said he, "let him stick yonder a while, to learn him mair sense than to gang intill an open well-ee and gar ane get a mell. I saw the gate I was gawn, but I couldna swee him aff; sae I just thought o' Jenny Blythe, and plunged in. I kend weel something was to happen, for I met her first this morning, the ill-hued carlin: but I had need to haud my tongue!—Gudeman, let us see a drap whisky." He was presented with a glass. "Come, here's Jenny Blythe," said Andrew, and drank it off.—"I wad be nae the waur o' a wee drap too," said Aberlosk, taking a glass of whisky in his hand, and looking stedfastly through it. "I think I see Jock the elder here," said he; "ay, it's just him—come, here's the five kirks o' Eskdale." He drank it off. "Gudeman, that's naething but a Tam-Park of a glass: if ye'll fill it again, I'll gie a toast ye never heard afore. This is *Bailey's Dictionary*," said Aedie, and drank it off again.—"But when a' your daffin's owre,

Aedie," said John, "what hae ye made o' our young friend?"—"Ou! she's safe encuch," returned he; "the best-man and John the elder are wi' her."

On looking round the corner of the house, we now perceived that the bride and her two attendants were close at hand. They came at a *quick canter*. She managed her horse well, kept her saddle with great ease, and seemed an elegant sprightly girl, of twenty-four or thereabouts. Every cap was instantly waved in the air, and the bride was saluted with three hearty cheers. Old John, well aware of what it behoved him to do, threw off his broad bonnet, and took the bride respectfully from her horse—kissed and welcomed her home. "Ye're welcome hame till us, Jeany, my bonny woman," said he; "may God bless ye, an' mak ye just as good an' as happy as I wish ye." It was a beautiful and affecting sight to see him leading her toward the home that was now to be her own. He held her hand in both his—the wind waved his long gray locks—his features were lengthened considerably the wrong way, and I could perceive a tear glistening on his furrowed cheek.

All seemed to know exactly the parts they had to act; but every thing came on me like magic, and quite by surprise. The bride now stopped short on the threshold, while the old man broke a triangular cake of short-bread over her head, the pieces of which he threw about among the young people. These scrambled for them with great violence and eagerness; and indeed they seemed always to be most in their element when any thing that required strength or activity was presented. For my part, I could not comprehend what the sudden convulsion meant, (for in a moment the crowd was moving like a whirlpool, and tumbling over one another in half dozens) till a little girl, escaping from the vortex, informed me that "they war battling wha first to get a haud o' the bride's bunn." I was still in the dark, till at length I saw the successful candidates presenting their favourites with small pieces of this mystical cake. One beautiful maid, with light locks, blue eyes, and cheeks like the vernal rose, came nimbly up to me, called me familiarly by my name, looked at me with perfect seriousness, and without even a smile on

her innocent face, asked me *if I was married*. I could scarcely contain my gravity, while I took her by the hand, and answered in the negative.—“An’ hae ye no gotten a piece o’ the bride’s cake?”—“Indeed, my dear, I am sorry I have not.”—“O, that’s a great shame, that ye hae nae gotten a wee bit! I canna bide to see a stranger guided that gate. Here, sir, I’ll gie ye the tae half o’ mine, it will ser’ us baith; an’ I wad rather want mysel than as civil a gentleman that’s a stranger should want.”

So saying, she took a small piece of cake from her lap, and parted it with me, at the same time rolling each of the pieces carefully up in a leaf of an old halfpenny ballad; but the whole of her demeanour showed the utmost seriousness, and of how much import she judged this trivial crumb to be. “Now,” continued she, “ye maun lay this aneath your head, sir, when ye gang to your bed, and ye’ll dream about the woman ye are to get for your wife. Ye’ll just think ye see her plainly an’ bodily afore your een; an’ ye’ll be sae weel acquainted wi’ her, that ye’ll ken her again when ye see her, if it war amang a thousand. It’s a queer thing, but it’s perfectly true; sae ye maun *mind no to forget*.”

I promised the most punctual observance of all that she enjoined, and added, that I was sure I would dream of the lovely giver; that indeed I would be sorry were I to dream of any other, as I deemed it impossible to dream of so much innocence and beauty.—“*Now mind no to forget*,” rejoined she, and skipped lightly away to join her youthful associates.

As soon as the bride was led into the house, old Nelly, the bridegroom’s mother, went aside to see the beast on which her daughter-in-law had been brought home; and perceiving that it was a mare, she fell a-crying and wringing her hands.—I inquired, with some alarm, what was the matter. “O dear, sir,” returned she, “it’s for the poor bairnies that’ll yet hae to dree this unlucky mischance—Laike-a-day, poor wae fu’ brats! they’ll no lie in a dry bed for a dozen o’ years to come!”

“Hout! haud your tongue, Nelly,” said the best man, the thing’s but a freat a’ thegither. But really we couldna help it: the factor’s naig wantit a fore-fit shoe, an’ was beckin like a water-craw. If I had ridden five miles

to the smiddy wi’ him, it is ten to ane but Jock Anderson wad hae been drunk, an’ then we wadna hae gotten the bride hame afore twall o’clock at night; sae I thought it was better to let them tak their chance than spoil sae muckle good sport, an’ I e’en set her on Wattie Bryden’s pownie. The factor has behaved very ill about it, the muckle stootin gowk! If I had durst, I wad hae gien him a deevil of a thrashin; but he says, ‘Faith it’s—that—yes, indeed—that—he will send them—yes, faith—it’s even a—a *new tikabed* every year.’”

The ceremony of the marriage next ensued; but as there was nothing peculiar about it (except that it took place in the bridegroom’s house, and not at the bride’s former home, which was out of the parson’s reach); and as it was, besides, the dullest part of that day’s exercise, I shall not say much about it, only that every thing was done decently and in order. But I have run on so long with this Number, that I fear I must postpone the foot-race, the dinner discourse, and final winding up of the wedding, till a future opportunity. H.

REMARKS ON GREEK TRAGEDY.

No II.

(*Æschyli Chæphori—Sophoclis Electra.*)

WHEN we study the history of our race, which is little else than a chronicle of crimes and follies, of blood shed in vulgar wars, and intellect wasted on unworthy purposes, the eye that wanders with disgust over the blotted page, turns with delight to the contemplation of the virtues and the genius by which it is sometimes brightened; nor are periods wanting, in which, degraded as man has generally been, he exhibits such moral and intellectual grandeur, as to make even the most cynical abate of the harshness with which he usually judges of human nature. Of these favoured times, in an eminent degree, was the age in which Æschylus flourished. Never, perhaps, did there exist at once, a greater number of men distinguished by virtue and talent. To prove this assertion, nothing more were necessary than to give a list of the honest statesmen who then presided in the councils of Athens,—of the warriors